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Comment p.4



The ups and downs of micro-living

Feature p.9-11



How Belarusian exiles took shelter in North Finchley

Feature p.19

Barnet FC are showing signs of life under Brennan



Credit Extinction Rebellion



Campaigners protest outside the waste plant. To read more about the story turn to page-2

Move to reduce Capita's role in council services agreed

Five services will be brought back in-house by 2023

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Councillors in Barnet have finalised plans to bring five more services that were previously outsourced to Capita back under the town hall's control.

Highways, recruitment, regeneration, procurement and regulatory services will all be handed back to the council by 2023.

A report presented to the town hall's policy and resources committee in December claimed returning the services would be "affordable" and would not "result in additional costs to the

council in delivering those services".

Barnet Council signed two major contracts with Capita in 2013, handing over a range of key local services to the outsourcing giant in a move designed to save money.

But the deals have been heavily criticised by opposition councillors following a string of problems, including a £2million fraud against the council by former Capita contractor Trishul Shah.

Four services, including finance and strategic human resources, have already been brought back in-house, while management of pensions was handed from Capita to the West Yorkshire Pension Fund in 2020

after The Pensions Regulator fined the local authority for poor data management and collection.

The latest insourcing move will see the council's back-office recruitment service return to the town hall's control in February 2022. The four remaining services will return to the council when the deals with Capita expire during 2023.

Capita will keep hold of six services: IT, customer services, revenues and benefits, land charges, building control, and planning and development control. Four more services will stay with Capita for one or two years pending a further review of the contracts.

Members of the policy and resources committee unanimously backed the report during the meeting. It will now be sent to full council, which is expected to approve the insourcing plans.

In a statement issued in November, a joint spokesperson for Barnet Council and Capita said the services had been reviewed "to ensure that they continue to deliver the best possible service for people in Barnet".

The spokesperson added that the council was "committed, with the support of its service partners, to delivering top-quality services that make the borough a better place to live, work and study for all".



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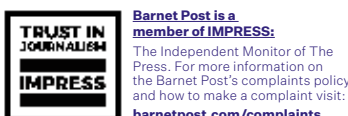
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In October 2021 hundreds of protesters marched through Edmonton and along the North Circular to the site where a new, larger incinerator is set to be built at Edmonton Eco Park. It was the biggest single act of protest against North London Waste Authority's new incinerator project to date. Credit: Extinction Rebellion

Deal agreed to build new North London incinerator

Councillors defy protests and demands from local MPs to pause incinerator project

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

North London Waste Authority (NLWA) has voted to approve a construction deal for a new, larger waste incinerator in Edmonton. Protest group Extinction Rebellion Barnet report that one Barnet resident has started a council tax strike in protest against the incinerator.

The contract for the facility – set to be around a third bigger than the current incinerator at Edmonton Eco Park in Advent Way, beside the River Lea – will be handed to Spanish conglomerate Acciona as a result of last month's vote.

Construction work is now due to begin by mid-2022, with work to prepare the site having been finished earlier this year.

It comes despite a recent call from MPs to halt the expansion of new waste incineration plants to protect people's health and guard against climate change.

Environmental campaigners have also piled pressure on NLWA to pause and review the project and to consider more environmentally-friendly alternatives, with multiple demonstrations held across North London in recent months. Opponents warn the plant will pump out hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide and other air pollutants.

The new incinerator, which won planning approval in 2017, is designed to replace an existing plant built in 1969. The larger facility will be capable of burning 700,000 tonnes

of North London's waste every year.

The key vote to sign a construction deal took place during a meeting of the NLWA board, which is formed of 14 councillors from Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest boroughs.

In a report published in December, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Air Pollution called for a moratorium on new incinerators, warning capacity was expanding "too quickly" and raising concerns over the release of carbon dioxide emissions, which contribute to climate change, and the release of ultrafine particles, which it deems a "significant health hazard".

North London parliamentarians, including Edmonton MP Kate Osamor, North Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn, Chingford and Woodford MP Iain Duncan Smith, and Hornsey and Wood Green MP Catherine West, have also called for the incinerator rebuild to be paused.

But NLWA has repeatedly resisted these demands, with chair Clyde Loakes claiming the new plant – part of the £1.2billion North London Heat and Power Project, which also includes new recycling facilities at Edmonton Eco Park – will be the safest and cleanest in the UK thanks to emissions controls designed to cut pollution.

Speaking during deputations to the meeting in December, a range of opponents criticised the incinerator rebuild and urged NLWA members to rethink their plans.

In a pre-recorded video, Olivia Eken,

from Enfield Climate Action Forum, said: "Expanding the incinerator at such a crucial time in the climate crisis will not only plunge Edmonton into a state of low recycling rates and toxic air, but also have detrimental health issues in its residents."

Warning over the scheme's impact on climate change, Dr Edward Tranah, who works at North Middlesex Hospital, called on NLWA to boost recycling rates to avoid burning waste.

Dr Rembrandt Koppelaar, a researcher who writes about the future of energy and the circular economy, claimed the incinerator contract would "waste at least £150m of taxpayers' money" and called on NLWA to invest in alternative technology that can increase plastic recycling.

Professor Vyvyan Howard, a specialist in toxicology, warned waste incineration releases particulate matter that can be damaging to health.

Addressing the concerns over emissions, NLWA managing director Martin Capstick said the plant would be the first in the UK to use "selective catalytic reduction" to control nitrous oxides and a "combined wet-dry scrubber system" to reduce particulates, acid gases and other emissions.

Cllr Loakes pointed out that the authority also plans to build a household waste recycling facility at Edmonton Eco Park to help boost recycling. He argued against exporting waste outside London, telling councillors "the rest of the country did not want our waste

being exported to them".

The vote to award the contract was not unanimous, however. Isidoros Diakides, a councillor in Haringey, voted against, citing concerns over value for money. Haringey's deputy leader Mike Hakata also abstained, after expressing similar concerns over procurement.

The remaining twelve councillors sitting on the board of NLWA – two from each of the six other boroughs – voted in favour of the deal with Acciona.

A spokesperson from Extinction Rebellion Barnet said: "in a time of climate catastrophe, building an incinerator ... is obscene. This is equivalent to 10% of the entire current CO2 emissions for North London. NLWA claim they will clean the pollution with filters, and stop CO2 with carbon capture - but no filter technology works on the ultra-fine particles...carbon capture is still magical thinking. 13 campaigners have started council tax strikes to protest against this incinerator – 1 in Barnet, and the other 12 across the North London boroughs.

"Our councillors must not commit over £700m of our taxes to a project that all the evidence shows is destructive, and pay it to a single bidder."

Childs Hill councillor Peter Zinkin, who sits on the board of the NLWA said: "As the NLWA we have the responsibility for the disposal of the 600,000 tonnes of waste we generate in North London. This decision should ensure our ability to do that for the next 50 years."



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COMMENT | 4

The ups and downs of micro-living

She wakes up in her studio flat. With well-practiced motion, she rolls up the duvet and pillows to one side before folding the bed into a smart wall bed system. After a quick shower, she has eggs and coffee as the washing machine churns next to her. She ponders if the overgrown plant in the corner should be replaced by an armchair. Every bit of space is precious. The washing machine beeps. She takes out the small items and switches on the dryer for the large items. Where would she hang the bed sheets?

At mid-day, she resumes the work on her model. The model sits on the work desk along with various objects: laptop, printer, sketch book, materials and tools. She clears her desk by putting the printer and its cables under the desk and spreading the tools and materials on the floor. She places the laptop on the sofa and puts on some music. Finally she can work away with enough desk area. After a few solid hours of focused work and making a mess, she cleans up and gets ready for a friend's visit.

Having promised to make a Cantonese dinner, she comes home with bags of groceries. The door cannot fully open because that space behind the door is the only place for a shoe rack and a bike. Storing anything outside in the communal hallway is forbidden. The open kitchen is a cluster of appliances arranged in the smallest footprint possible. She folds out a small table to supplement food preparation surface. Her friend arrives and compliments the smell which reminds her to open the windows to ventilate. She sets up the same small table for eating as the flat-sharing friend complains about not getting along with flatmates. That makes her feel lucky to have privacy and freedom in her own space. After the friend leaves, feeling too tired to prepare the wall bed, she falls asleep on the sofa.

I wrote this imagined diary based on my own experiences living in a new studio flat in Colindale around eight years ago.

Colindale has a high density of studio flats with many more currently being built. Some residents have expressed concerns to *Barnet Post* that Barnet Council are not building enough family homes and studio flats could make the area feel more transient, potentially leading to lower voter turnout.

The studio flat is ubiquitous in new developments across the capital. Micro-living is a global phenomenon especially in cosmopolitan cities like Paris, New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong etc. At first glance, the general reasons seem to be the high demand for affordable



BY ADRIENNE LAU

Are studio flats just another profit-making tool or can we create shared spaces where the community can thrive?

properties in desirable neighbourhoods, the rise of singledom or childless couples, and a stepping stone for first-time buyers to trade up in the future. But, can we really explain the trend through demand?

In Colindale, studio flat sizes in new developments ranges from just below 300 to over 400 square feet. The larger versions are an 'optimised' one-bed flat layout with a sliding screen separating the bed from the living space. The smaller ones are a single open plan space with a bathroom. Some have balconies half the size of the flat. The monthly rent is upwards of £1,000 a month which is just about acceptable for someone upgrading from flat-sharing in London.

The prices for buying range from

around mid £200K to mid £300K providing enough differentiation in comparison to one-bed flats priced at around £400K in the same developments. It is in fact a brilliant business plan for developers since studio flats increase the total number of units that fit in a buildable area. The strategy makes every square foot work hard to make a profit from the cumulative premium buyers pay. I can imagine the council welcomes it because of the extra council tax collectable from sheer higher occupant numbers.

Even architects and designers love designing micro-living spaces. It is a fascinating design challenge to solve real problems. How to double and triple up the use of one space, how to design fold-out furniture

People need space to sleep, work, cook, dry their laundry, stretch and do things they love. Keeping sentimental objects should not be a luxury

and smart storage units the likes of which Marie Kondo would applaud. How to create a hyper-functional environment for the next generation of cosmopolitan go-getters. There are design competitions, conferences, TV shows and publications dedicated to small spaces. This industry helps proliferate a certain ideal that there is a trendy modern lifestyle thriving in metropolitan cities.

In illustrations where a single man lounges comfortably with an iPad in his multi-functional cocoon, looking like a first-class flyer, we're seduced into thinking that humans are not diverse and messy with a wide range of needs. Sometimes you cannot design your way out of the lack of space with furniture systems or advocating disciplined and organised living.

People need space to sleep, work, cook, dry their laundry, stretch and do things they love. Keeping sentimental objects should not be a luxury. People with disabilities might need more space to manoeuvre. Not everyone can work from a small tablet. People need space to be creative.

The pandemic has exposed the acute difference in experience between people living in large homes and those living in small homes. With work-from-home practices, many city dwellers have moved out of their extortionately pricy shoeboxes to more affordable and larger homes outside of the capital. This ought to be a wake-up call for London councils to address spatial inequality.

There is a place for studio flats, of course. In fact, they can be a valuable asset for a community if they are managed equitably and not as a financial product. Small affordable spaces can be helpful for people going through transitional times such as couple separation or when someone is finding their feet upon arrival to a new city. They can also be an attractive option for people needing short stays – tourists, people who need a regular but temporary presence in the city, guests visiting and staying for the night.

We could make studio living more attractive by increasing the quality and quantity of community spaces. For people who do live permanently in studio flats, their experience outside of their homes becomes incredibly important. What lacks in their own homes can be provided for in communal gardens, shared kitchens, storage, workshops and studios, workspace, guest rooms, social and play areas. If we can make studio flat living attractive as a community, then we can be assured that everyone benefits from a higher quality of life. Studio-livers would have more incentive to stay in an area, feeling less transitory. Like this, an area dense with studio flats could become a real home for many.

FEATURE | 5

Save the pavilion at Tudor Park



BY SIMON COHEN

The repair and renovation of the neo-Georgian-style cricket pavilion in Tudor Park built by S Maw & Sons in 1920, is long overdue.

Early in 2020, it was included in Barnet Council's local heritage list as being of historical and architectural interest because of social and community value, its age and rarity,

and landmark qualities.

The residents' survey which I organised last spring had 1025 responses and showed that local people very much wanted a café in a refurbished pavilion with public toilets and new community space.

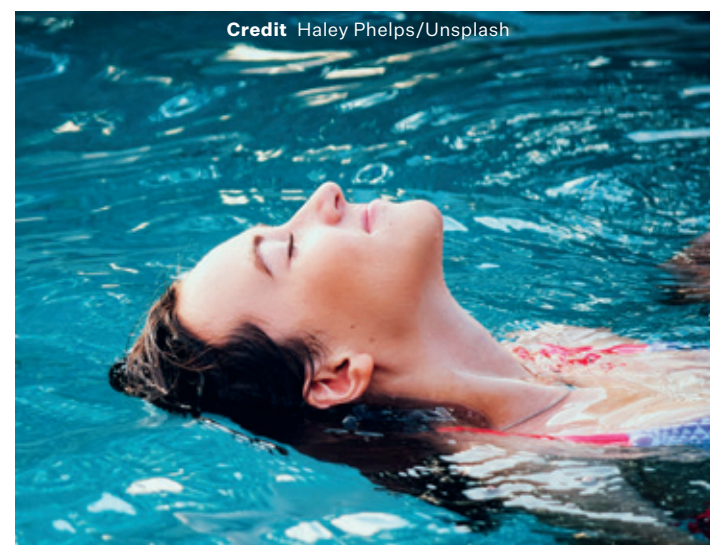
There have been numerous attempts over the past decade to get the council engaged with repairs and to find a way to re-use the building. At the LBB Chipping Barnet Area Committee in June 2021, a motion

was passed to fund £200,000 for structural and refurbishment work.

I have since set up a Friends of Tudor Park Pavilion group which has produced its initial Vision Statement. A suggested layout change of the pavilion interior could enable a more flexible central space for community activities, classes such as yoga, pilates and art, playgroups, exhibitions, and meeting rooms for local clubs and organisations. A café would be a perfect focal point: close to the existing children's playground, it would provide a place to meet with friends or get out of the home office to do some work. Other improvements could include a completely new kitchen to cater for events and functions.

It would be great to get more feedback and involvement from the community so we start 2022 with a strong voice and clear direction for the council to move the project forward. We hope the regeneration of the pavilion will be part of the Masterplan for improving amenities and the quality of the Tudor Park open space.

Please show your support by emailing FriendsOfTudorParkPavilion@gmail.com and share your ideas with us.



Credit Haley Phelps/Unsplash

Teaching adults' to swim

How aquaphobia can impact adults lives

BY LEIGH HARVEY

Swimming can have a huge impact on an adult's life. It brings about so many pleasures, from friends to fitness, to the pure joy of being in the water. But, being unable to swim can cause great anxiety and have negative effects on one's life. People who can't swim miss out on splashing about in a pool with their children or dipping their toes into the sea on holidays.

I spent many years teaching babies and children how to swim and love the water, and started noticing more and more nervous parents accompanying their little ones. Often lessons became about teaching the adults how to blow bubbles as well as their children.

Planet Swim Adult Swim School came about in response to my experiences. Lots of adults who can't swim or who are holding onto a phobic reaction to being in water feel too embarrassed to admit how they are feeling. They are not comfortable being in a public pool surrounded by children and spectators. I decided to find a private pool hire so that I could offer group classes specifically for adults with aquaphobia.

I now use a beautiful, quiet, warm pool at a primary school (no children around) in Barnet.

Swimmers-to-be are able to share their experiences and emotions in a safe environment. I am trained as an Advanced Aquaphobia Coach with the incredible Institute of Aquaphobia and Planet Swim is now an Approved IOA Swim School. I have found that all of the adults who attend are able to submerge their faces by the end of their first session and all are able to swim by the end of their course.

We also coach advanced adult swimmers who swim for fitness and for competitions such as triathlon and open water events. Since the dreaded coronavirus era, I notice that people are making the most of every opportunity given to them. We had to shut down during the lockdowns which was such a shame and halted progress but the joy on everyone's faces when we were able to jump back in was evident.

I get immense pleasure from being able to change a person's life. By learning to swim we also learn to understand how our bodies work. Just seeing a previously terrified, rigid adult now floating on their back with a grin from ear to ear is all it takes to reassure me that what we do as aquaphobia coaches is life-changing.

You can expect to find me in a pool still sharing the joy when I am 99!

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NEWS | 7

Three homeless deaths registered in Barnet in 2020

BY JOANNA MORRIS,
DATA REPORTER

A nationwide effort to get people off the streets during the coronavirus pandemic contributed to a national drop in homeless deaths registered during 2020 – but nearly 700 people across England and Wales died without a home to call their own.

In light of the sobering statistics, housing charity Shelter called on the government to step in and ensure nobody is left out in the cold to face the “ravages of homelessness” this winter.

Estimates from the Office for National Statistics suggest three homeless deaths were registered in Barnet in 2020, while 11 people have died since records began in 2013. The figures, which mainly include those sleeping rough or using emergency accommodation, are based on registered deaths plus an estimate of how many people died without being correctly identified as homeless.

A snapshot government survey taken on one night between October and November 2020 found that six people were sleeping rough in the area at that time. And separate figures from the Ministry of



Credit
Jon Tyson/
Unsplash

The “ravages of homelessness” responsible for almost a dozen deaths

Housing, Communities and Local Government show 2,030 households were identified as being homeless, or at risk of homelessness, during the first year of the pandemic.

Responding to the national figures, Polly Neate, chief executive of housing

charity Shelter, said: “To think people’s final days were spent homeless in the pandemic is a sobering thought.

“If it wasn’t for the government’s Covid-19 response to help people off the streets even more lives would have been lost.

“As we head into another hard winter with the virus still circulating, we cannot leave anyone out in the cold.”

Nearly nine in ten people who died while homeless nationally were men, while two in five lost their lives to drug poisoning and more than a dozen died with Covid-19.

Though the figure includes some deaths that happened during the previous year but were not registered until 2020 due to pandemic-inspired disruption to services, the true scale of homeless deaths could be higher than reported.

The ONS said the government’s Everyone In scheme led to homeless people being placed in accommodations such as hotels, making it more difficult to identify them in mortality records. However, together with temporary bans on eviction, the scheme is thought to have contributed to a decrease in the homeless population nationally.

A spokeswoman for the department for levelling up, housing and communities said the Everyone In scheme had helped 37,000 vulnerable people and that the government is providing more than £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness.

She added: “Every death on our streets is one too many, which is why we remain committed to ending rough sleeping altogether.”

Thousands of EU nationals have been refused permission to stay in Barnet after Brexit, figures reveal.

Home Office data published for the first time, shows around 2,240 people who applied to continue living in the area by 30th September had their application rejected.

Applicants can challenge a negative EU Settlement Scheme application by launching an appeal.

But the 3Million, which campaigns for EU citizens’ rights, is concerned about the status of those who are left “in limbo” waiting for their appeals to be concluded.

The EU Settlement scheme launched in March 2019 to regulate the immigration status of European citizens who live in the UK.

Those who have lived in the UK for five years, and meet the criteria, can receive settled status and remain in the country indefinitely.

Others who have lived in the country for less time can receive pre-settled status, which allows them to remain

BY FEDERICA BEDENDO, DATA REPORTER

Thousands of EU nationals refused permission to stay in Barnet after Brexit 2,240 people had their applications rejected

for a further five years. They can later apply for settled status.

The figures show that since applications opened, 92,940 people applied to continue living in Barnet, with 87,970 receiving a conclusion by the end of September.

Of them, 47,710 (54%) received settled status and 35,610 (40%) pre-settled.

The highest number of applications came from citizens of Romania (23,990), Poland (10,950) and Italy (8,410).

Monique Hawkins, policy and research officer at the 3million, said many people had lost their job or rental opportunity while waiting for application

and appeal outcomes.

She said: “Many people report not being able to get through to helplines, and find it next to impossible to get progress updates on their applications.

“For those who have been refused, the administrative review and appeals process face their own lengthy delays.

“We are extremely concerned about the length of time it is taking to unite people with their lawful status, and thereby their rights to continue living and working in the UK.”

Though the scheme officially closed on 30th June, EU citizens with limited reasonable grounds for missing the deadline can

still apply to secure their rights.

Around 2,390 applications were submitted after the deadline in Barnet.

The Home Office said people with a pending application, are protected while the outcome of their application is unknown.

A spokeswoman said the EU Settlement Scheme has been an “overwhelming success”, with 6.3 million applications received and 5.5 million people being granted permission to stay so far.

She added: “Caseworkers will always look for reasons to grant rather than refuse.

“Individuals can be refused on eligibility or criminality grounds, and if a refused applicant disagrees with our decision, they can apply for an administrative review or appeal.

“We have published non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for making a late EUSS application and take a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering them, and we’ve made millions of pounds available in funding for organisations to support vulnerable applicants.”

“
The highest number
of applications
came from citizens
of Romania, Poland
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”



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SCAN ME

FEATURE | 9

Belarus' hidden library

BY BELLA SALTIEL

How Belarusian exiles took shelter in North Finchley

In October 2021, Belarusian immigrants paid respect to 100 Belarusian poets and intellectuals who were executed by Soviet soldiers in the same month in 1937. They gathered at the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum, located on a suburban street in North Finchley. Together, they read the poets' words aloud and then read the poetry of political prisoners who were jailed during the 2020 uprisings. "It is history repeating itself", Dr Karalina Matskevich told me recently. Karalina is a theologian who is on the board of trustees for the library. "If you are on your own in your home, just reading the poems is difficult. You need to express it somehow. Otherwise, the despair and grief are overwhelming."

Karalina's desire to draw links between the past and the present is not surprising. On any normal day, she might spend hours turning the pages of dusty books and occasionally find messages scribbled in the margins. Opening a small book, she shows me the handwriting on the inner cover, "I love this", she says.



Books wash up at the library's door, battered after a journey across a continent. Some travelled with Belarusians fleeing the Iron Curtain in 1945. In an effort to preserve a history that would otherwise have been swallowed up by the homogenising force of Soviet communism, these books were stowed away with refugees as they made their way to Western Europe.

The library grew out of the Belarusian Catholic Mission founded in London in 1947. Community donations were used to buy Marian House on Holden Avenue and set up a library devoted to the country's history. Pavel Shevtsov, a lawyer by day who is also on the board of trustees, said there was no particular connection to Finchley before then.

Father Česlaus Sipovič, a Bishop of the Belarusian Church, was the first to deposit his collection of rare books at Marian House. As the years went on the collection bloomed. In 1971

Father Alexander Nadson was appointed custodian of the library and he spent the following years travelling across Europe to auction houses, bidding for rare manuscripts. One summer in Monaco, he used his proficiency in different languages to confuse the opposition, securing a sought after text in the process.

A return to Soviet times

Ever since Aliaksandr Lukashenko's security officials used rubber bullets to crack down on citizens protesting a rigged election, the library's task to preserve Belarusian identity has taken on a new, and altogether more urgent, meaning.

I first visited the centre at the end of November, just as Lukashenko's government was sending hopeful asylum seekers from the Middle East to wait at the Polish border in the freezing winter snow. Pavel says the dictator is using the

migrants to distract from his crimes in the country. During the 2020 political uprising, 30,000 demonstrators were detained and 4,000 alleged they had been tortured by the authorities. According to Human Rights Watch, at least three protesters died as a result of police violence.

"He was raised in Soviet times," Pavel says. His latest impositions are just another way of returning to, what perhaps seems to him, a simpler moment in history.

Lukashenko has been president of Belarus since 1994. He grew up in what was then the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, living in a small village where he was taunted by rumours that his absent father was of Roma descent. He served in the military and began his political career just as Belarus became independent in 1991. His government has retained power over industry, warped election results and, in an effort to maintain a close relationship with Russia, given the Russian language the same status as Belarusian. In the process, an independent national identity has been destroyed.

"Just speaking the Belarusian language you are already expressing something"

For Pavel and Karalina the Belarusian language was a portal. Karalina remembers sitting with her father in their kitchen in Minsk, all of the phones were switched off and he whispered, “our language is disappearing.” After that, “I felt that I will speak that language,” she says, “I will not disappear.” So she started to speak Belarusian in Minsk, even though so many people couldn’t understand what she was doing. “It was like, only villagers, only old babushkas speak Belarusian. Why would the young students speak that language?”

“We were really Gorbachev’s children,” Pavel says. They both came of age in that small liberal window in the 1980s when Gorbachev Perestroika “started allowing people to express their political views”. With their newly found Belarusian identity, they felt emboldened.

Pavel arrived in London in the late 1980s to study law. Karalina came to study a few years later. Both had intended to return to Belarus “to use the knowledge but it wasn’t possible.” Soon after Karalina arrived in London, Lukashenko came to power and “just things started changing so drastically.” Pavel now lives within driving distance of the library with his family and Karalina commutes from South London.

In Belarus, it wasn’t long before dissent was crushed under authoritarianism. Lukashenko ensures his longevity, in part, by controlling the cultural narrative. The Russification was singular and suppressing, preventing Belarusians from connecting to pre-Soviet history. Pavel says, “Lukashenko is basically a successor of the KGB with the same values as them.”

It makes the library and collection of artefacts act as a political statement “in as much as Belarusian identity, but also culture is politicised,” says Karalina, “just speaking the Belarusian language you are already expressing something.”



Quran from the 1400’s written by Lipka Tatars

So much of Belarus’ history was distorted under Soviet rule. Karalina points to the Vilnius Region, shared with Lithuania, where Eastern and Western travellers met. A rich culture formed. We examine the browned pages of an

ancient Quran written by Tatars. There’s a Hebrew Bible, written and illustrated in Belarusian and, from a much later date, a German dictionary translated into Polish, Yiddish, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Russian. There are also small objects made of bone, fashioned by clergymen who were banished to labour camps in Siberia.

Before Luchashenko showed his true colours, there was talk of sending some of the collection back to Belarus. But, London is safer for the books. It was easy to imagine Belarusian history locked in the same vaults that store the KGB’s archive.

Hiding history from view has stunted a transformative justice process, particularly, for the victims of Stalinist repression.

From 1937 to 1940 some 30,000 Belarusians were killed and buried in mass graves at Kurapaty, a forest outside of Minsk. The government does not commemorate the victims and in 2019 Belarus officials

used bulldozers to demolish 70 crosses at the site of the executions. The same is true for those who were lost to the hostile wilderness of Siberia. Their ancestors and surviving family

members will have been forced to write their own piecemeal history.

This state-lead silence acts as a barrier, forcing people to make their own pilgrimages. Some have ended up at the Francis Skaryna Library. Either they want to donate artefacts that have been passed down through their families – a Gulag uniform was saved for decades until a man turned up and entrusted it to the museum- or, to track down family trees and personal documents.

One day, an American arrived from a military base in Peterborough.

“The library’s task to preserve Belarusian identity has taken on a new, and altogether more urgent, meaning”

Karalina explains how “his grandad was a Belarusian Jew. He moved to America, married an Irish woman who hated the Jewish identity of her husband and never allowed him to sing his songs in Yiddish. It meant he would go to the cellar to sing. So, the Jewish identity was very much suppressed in the family.

“The man arrived at the Library full of questions about his grandad’s hometown in Belarus, “Where is it?



What were the people like there? I want to know his life. My grandad's life." It's very touching," she says.

For Belarusian people who have settled in London, the library acts as an anchor, offering shape to a community who are now reliving many of the same traumas their grandparents survived. Perhaps, because the brutality of Lukashenko's regime has been forced to the surface, a new wave of immigrants have started calling themselves "the new Belarusians", learning the language just as Karalina and Pavel did when they were young.

The Belarusian church

Just opposite the library, there's another house providing lodgings for priests. In its garden is a small church, built out of timber in traditional Belarusian style. Framed by white birches, the church seems out of place on this quiet residential street. It was named the Holy Hierarch Cyril of Turau and All the Patron Saints of the Belarusian People and built in 2016 to mark the victims of the Chernobyl disaster. Today, it is still used for services each Sunday, as well as to host cultural events.

The bare planks of wood appear bent and jagged as if the form has been smudged out. Pavel says these fluid lines mirror the ephemeral nature of a culture that is in danger of extinction. Many of Belarus' simple wooden churches have been replaced, or the domes, once plain, now shine thick with golden paint in the Russian Orthodox style. After touring the Belarusian countryside, the architect chose to replicate the ways the unused buildings had begun to rot. More recently, the Holy Hierarch Cyril of Turau church has taken on the shape

of the landscape around it, growing thick with moss.

Inside the wood is clean. Standing motionless in the cool quiet interior, I look up to the domed ceiling where a single bell hangs down.

"Maybe you can ring it and I can take a photo?" I ask.

Pavel takes the cord, smiling joyfully. I smile too, as the shrill sound fills the space.

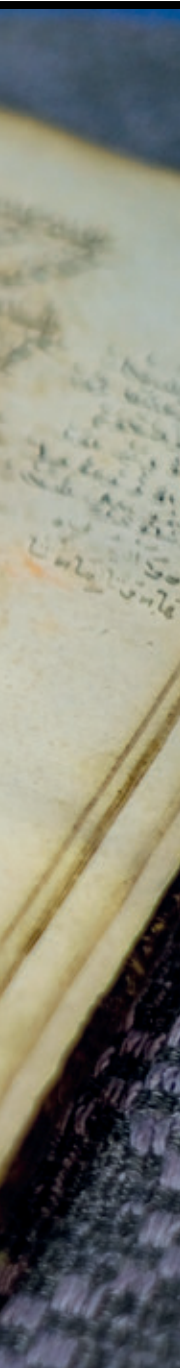
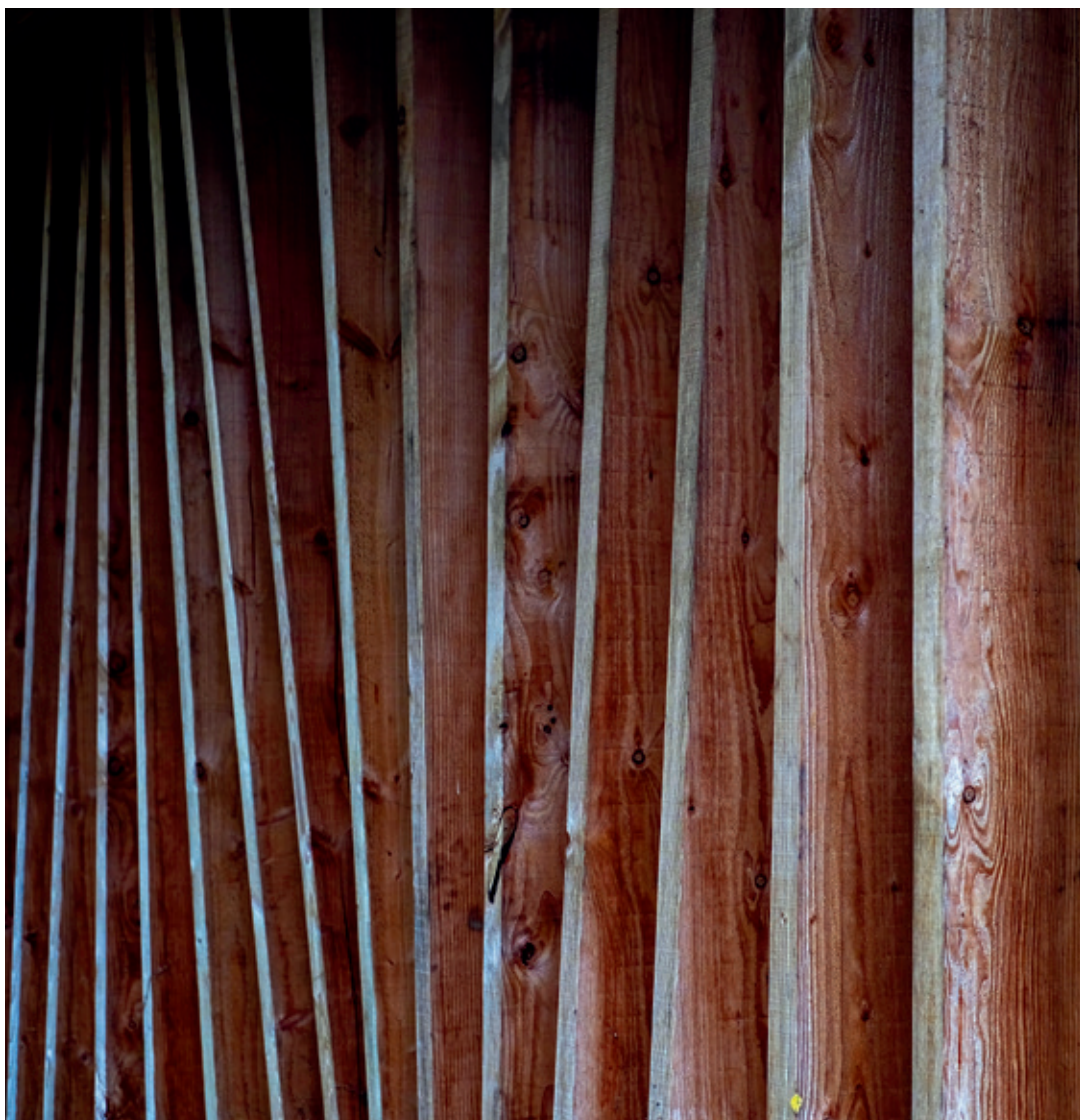
To visit the library: 7 Holden Rd, London N12 8HS

For more information:

Visit skaryna.org.uk

Call 020 3088 4729

Email library@skaryna.org.uk



12 ARTS & CULTURE

The passage of time

A life, past and future, for a man and his mattress

BY ANANYA BADITHE

I head home every day from Finchley Road. I get off at the 02 bus stop and walk through the subway to cross the road. One particularly cold day, in my usual journey mode, music in my ears, head in the clouds, I stumbled over the corner of a thick mattress poking out across my path. Without much thought, I regained my footing and continued on my way.

It wasn't until the next day when I saw that the mattress had sheets on it, and was littered with food, papers and a broken clock, that I started to feel uneasy. This feeling continued, as I became hyperaware of the mattress and the space it inhabited.

Sometimes I could see a person sleeping on it, sometimes I couldn't and it was empty. I could never see the person's face fully. I'm pretty sure they were male but how they came to be there was impossible to know.

It came into my mind a few times to give the guy something, like to eat or drink. But I didn't. Maybe because I could see a lot of stuff already there. What, I wondered, could I contribute to this person's life that I knew nothing about?

Day by day, the man's space seemed

to gain more life, more identity. An old crate was now serving as a table covered in cartons, wrappers and old books.

Time passed and I rarely saw the man on the mattress. I knew he must go somewhere every day at the time I passed or perhaps for the whole day. I wondered where he went and what he did. Did he have a secret identity? Did he go to work and conceal that he was sleeping rough? But that felt quite unrealistic.

We are all prey to our ignorance and quickly choose to forget. I could kind of imagine how he might feel. What it's like to hide. But I knew I could never truly understand it, with these thoughts and feelings fading as I reached the end of the underpass.

We are all prey to our ignorance and quickly choose to forget, as the poet and playwright Carol Ann Duffy wrote in her poem *War Photographer*:

"The reader's eyeballs prick with tears between bath and pre-lunch beers."

I tried to empathise with this man dwelling in the damp, bleak subway. How had it come to this? It made me appreciate how strong and resilient humans can be.

There were days when I would pass wearing thick layers and thermals yet still shivering. How did he feel on those days?

On the days where I was drenched by the rain, I thought of how it would be to never get completely dry.

I barely feel at home sometimes even with a roof over my head. I wondered how he felt having so little to protect him.

This guy's home was something I saw every day over months, a year maybe. Sometimes I felt it was too painful and too private to even look. But I did. I watched it grow. At one point, his home had sprawled out and occupied half the walking space.

I would often want to look at the different things he had, trying to piece together his story. It never felt easy to look for long; afraid that other passers-by would think I was somehow judging. I did wonder about the safety of his situation. How long can someone survive in these harsh conditions?

The gradual growth of mattress to home disappeared in a snap.

One day, I got off the bus, same as usual, about to walk through the underpass, expecting to see the man's shelter. Maybe a little bigger, maybe with a little more character.

It was gone.

Empty space.

The hollow body of a tunnel.

It takes so little to break something.

Ignorance is bliss they say. It sure is,

but not for the ones we overlook.

A single unfelt judgement causes the abrupt disruption of a whole damn life.

There is no way of telling if it was an unhappy ending for the man. He may have been given a better place to live. He may be in a better state. Something that felt like an end, for me, may simply be a new beginning, for him.

There is no way of knowing.

Rising homelessness is yet another symptom of the coronavirus pandemic in Barnet, the last decade has seen close to a dozen homeless people die.

We are so reluctant to take that extra step to help. We take our comfort for granted.

Please go beyond giving away a few leftovers on your way home or the loose change from your pockets.

You could volunteer at your local soup kitchen or donate to a food bank. You can find organisations here that tackle homelessness in London and rely on volunteers.

If you or someone you know is facing homelessness contact Depaul UK. It's one of the UK's largest youth homelessness charities. It provides emergency accommodation, coaching and activity programmes to manage mental health and educational training.

This essay originally appeared on the youth media website *Exposure*: shorturl.at/xCK13

Exposure is looking for young people's testimonies of how they are getting through the coronavirus crisis. Please get in touch to share your experiences and advice.

Ananya is a sixth form student at Woodhouse College. She is currently studying Mathematics, English literature, Psychology and Physics. Ananya is passionate about writing, and fascinated by how much meaning just a few words can hold. You can read more from Ananya at her blog, *Tip Of The Pen*: tipofthepenblog.wordpress.com

Creative practice in times of

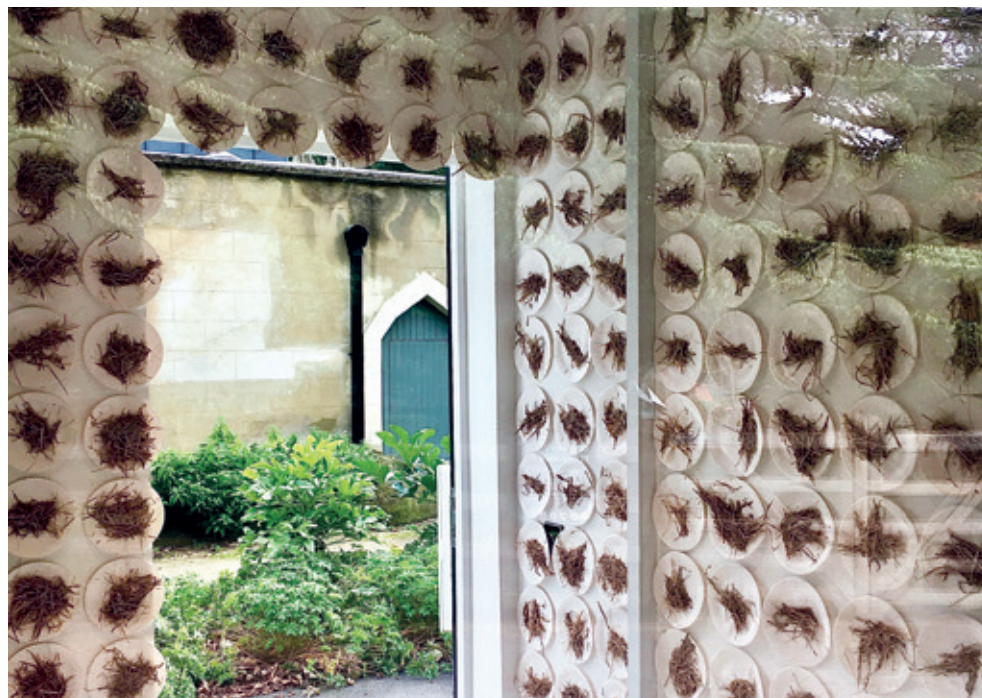
Finding refuge in my work

BY REBEKAH DEAN

I am a live and visual artist, renting a curious studio at Stephens House & Gardens on East End Road in Finchley, doubling as The Kiosk Gallery, where I am currently showing an installation titled *Discharging Materials*.

I present sculptural and performance artworks created out of hay, flour and water. We opened in November 2021 with a live performance exploring notions of belonging and the ageing female body.

During lockdown, I found refuge in work and I dived even deeper into the physical and mental processes contained within my creative practice.



One strategy I use to maintain creativity is walking. I find the steady rhythm of putting one foot down on the ground, closely followed by the other, helps to develop a momentum for thinking and moves me away from the making with hands, towards making with the mind. US *Guardian* writer Rebecca Solnit writes in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* that "the act of remembering is imagined as a real act...a physical act: as walking...". In other words, walking helps us to process our thoughts and feelings.

I had always been accustomed to empty streets but during the lockdown, the terrain filled up, and some days walking felt like a scene from the film *The Truman Show*. I was able to observe families and couples conduct their relationships on the move.

As that first lockdown ended in 2020, I remember feeling determined to challenge the zombie-like existence that had hemmed us all in for months. I had become aware

Crop of the Cream

Interview with local musician Malcolm Bruce

BY SIMON ELLINAS

Stepping out from under the shadow of a great parent is often seen as a formative experience. Franz Xaver, Mozart, Liza Minelli, Sean Lennon. Lily Collins and Barnet's own multi-talented musician, Malcolm Bruce of High Barnet, who is the son of Cream's Jack Bruce.

Malcolm said: "My father was, of course, an early influence and always encouraged me to go in my own direction. As a tribute to him, I was very happy to partake in the Music of Cream project (alongside Eric Clapton's nephew Will Johns and Ginger Baker's son, Kofi) for as long as it lasted but I am very self-directed about what I want to achieve.

"It's taken decades but I think I'm finally arriving at a point where I have something to say. I'm looking at songs I wrote fifteen years ago which are coming to fruition now."

Years spent in America resulted in Malcolm's first solo album *Salvation* recorded in Nashville. He's working on a second album, *Fake Humans and Real Dolls*. The music will tell the story of robot sex dolls, that, Malcolm fears, have replaced real women for some men. At its heart, this is an album about navigating intimacy in "a post-human world of transhumanism and artificial intelligence." Despite the dystopian theme, "there's some joy and humour in the record."



Credit Simon Ellinas

Malcolm is constantly pushing his own artistic boundaries in search of new experiences. He's recently played the piano on a demo jazz recording with Chester Thompson, the American drummer with Frank Zappa and Genesis. Contrasting his rock sound, his "musical hero" ... would probably be

John Coltrane or Miles Davis".

The pandemic has limited a full collaboration with Chester, so Malcolm is planning to record an album with some British jazz musicians. The pandemic had dried up live performances, "over the last two years I've only done two or three shows in small venues apart from the Hackney Empire with percussionist Abass Dodoo who runs the One Drum Foundation"

Beyond rock and jazz, classically-trained pianist Malcolm has also been composing an opera based on the life of an ancient Chinese emperor called King You.

"*King You's Folly* is based on a story from about 900BC and it encompasses love, greed, some cruelty and finally, justice. It was due to be performed at the Sadler's Wells Theatre next year but that has been put on hold as well."

Still, he's been kept busy with rewrites to reduce the lyrics and with the production of a completely new libretto based on the stone age myth of 'Doggerland'.

"I was inspired by an H.G. Wells short story *A Story of the Stone Age*" The opera concerns the idea of a lost Atlantis under the North Sea connecting Britain to Europe. "People could literally walk across marshlands until they reached (what is now) Amsterdam."

Back in the recording studio, Malcolm plays all instruments alongside a drummer suitable for each project. "*On Fake Humans and Real Dolls* I have the great drummer, Joel Clemson and we also have a string quartet called the United Strings of Europe headed by Julian Azkoul."

“

It's taken decades but I think I'm finally arriving at a point where I have something to say

”

As a multi-instrumentalist, Malcolm finds it had to choose which instrument he'd favour if stranded on a desert island. But, if pushed, "guitars are more practical than pianos."

A lot of his recording takes place in Barnet where he has lived for seven years. "I moved here from Crouch End. It's the best place to live in London. The people are friendly and there's a very village-like atmosphere which makes it feel very safe."

Malcolm would like to confirm that he is not Liberal Democrat politician Malcolm Grey Bruce, Baron Bruce of Bennachie.

Fake Humans and Real Dolls will be available sometime in 2022.

Keep in touch with Malcolm for updates:

Visit malcolmbrucemusic.com
Facebook /malcolmbrucemusic
Instagram @malxbruce

Simon Ellinas is a cartoonist, caricaturist and occasional writer living and working in Barnet:
Visit simonillustrations.com
Twitter @cartoonelli

uncertainty

that the isolation had made me lonely and the work was not growing in the way that I hoped for. What I needed was to engage and physically connect

In the essays *Of Word and Flesh*, the Bulgarian French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, argues that "only an experience can save us". After my confinement in lockdown, the only way to save myself from loneliness would be through creating an experience with other artists.

And so, in August 2020, I partnered with Stephens House & Gardens to curate and develop a sculpture trail for their historic landscaped gardens. I invited ten local North London female artists to respond to the transitory times of the pandemic by submitting an ephemeral sculptural artwork to appear within the gardens, accessible to the public using a map.

Briefly in Transit encouraged a walking public to access the arts whilst remaining on the move. The trail was subsequently

funded by the Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant and Avenue House Estate Trust and in 2021 became part of an online collection for walking research at the University of Glasgow, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

After the sculpture trail had gone up, I took a last-minute walk around the gardens before officially opening them to the public and thought about how we will make sense of this strange time. For me, walking will always help me to think and I hope that in my art I can facilitate this same sense that, in transit, we can move towards understanding.

Rebekah Dean teaches Art for Wellbeing at Stephens House & Gardens. For more information:
Instagram @rebekahdean.1
Visit rebekahdean.wordpress.com

Visit Stephens House and Gardens at 17 E End Rd, London N3 3QE

Upcoming Kiosk Gallery exhibitions 2022:
Artist Mary T Spence
21st January–18th February



Mika Narumi

14

HISTORY

Victor bombers at Cricklewood factory

BY SHYAM BHATIA

Barnet's key role in supporting the country's strategic defences has been highlighted by a senior engineer who used to work for leading aerospace manufacturer Handley Page in Cricklewood.

Victor bombers built by the company at their Cricklewood factory were used from the mid-1950s to deploy Yellow Sun Hydrogen bombs designed at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston in Berkshire. Four years later the same aircraft were adapted to carry nuclear-tipped Blue Steel missiles focused on Cold War targets behind the Iron Curtain.

Details of the Cricklewood-built Victors were disclosed by 81-year-old retired engineer Alan Dowsett who lived with his parents in Hadley Green and started his professional life in 1959 as an apprentice with Handley Page and worked for them until the company was wound up in 1970.

"The fuselage components of the bombers were built at Cricklewood", Mr Dowsett told *Barnet Post*. "The nose was built at Radlett, south of St Albans, and Rolls Royce engines were fitted at Derby. All the components finally came together at Radlett.

Dowsett, the author of *Handley Page*, published by Tempus, was speaking at a December function to highlight the new Brent Cross Town visitor pavilion. Local history enthusiasts and a Barnet councillor – Alan Schneiderman – were among the small group of visitors who attended his talk, entitled, *Handley Page in Cricklewood: A brief history from 1912 until 1965*.

Before, during and after his talk Dowsett explained how 83 Victors built at Cricklewood were part of the Royal Air Force's V Bomber force that

also included the Vulcan built by Avro and the Valiant by Vickers at their own separate sites in the country. The Victor, Valiant and Vulcan all made up the UK's strategic nuclear strike force until Royal Navy submarines took over the nuclear deterrent role using Polaris intercontinental missiles developed by the US.

A total of 83 Victor bombers were built by Handley Page and 39 were still in service in 1963 when a final handful were converted to flight refuelling tankers. They were finally retired in 1993. However, the last aircraft ever to be produced by the company at Cricklewood and Radlett was the turboprop-powered Jetstream passenger aircraft. Jetstream was still undergoing trials in 1970 when the company went into liquidation.

“*According to Dowsett some 3,000 aircraft were built and tested in Cricklewood by the time production of the Victor started in the late 1950s*”

Dowsett, who graduated from Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Barnet with three A levels in Maths, Physics and Chemistry

started his professional life as an apprentice with Handley Page and was working on the Jetstream when the company folded.

"We were working on hot weather trials with the Jetstream to prove it could work in hot weather", he recalled. "They sent us to Khartoum, Ennetbba and Fort Lamy (subsequently renamed as N'Djamena) in the former French African colony of Chad. Earlier trials were held in Dubai."

Although Dowsett worked only on commercial passenger aircraft, he and other members of staff were all too aware of the Victor being built alongside and in secret. Described as "boasting a futuristic design" that epitomised the jet age of the 1950s and 1960s, the Cricklewood components were produced in secrecy before being added to other locations. Nuclear missiles carried in its underbelly are thought to have been fitted at RAF Wittering in Cambridgeshire.

According to Dowsett some 3,000 aircraft were built and tested in Cricklewood by the time production of the Victor started in the late 1950s. Company founder Sir Frederick Handley Page started building monoplanes and biplanes from earlier factory premises at Woolwich, Farnbridge and Barking Creek. Cricklewood was for building bigger aircraft, including the Handley Page Transport and the HP 57 Halifax that was used to bomb Berlin during the Second World War. During the inter-war years, the adjoining Cricklewood aerodrome briefly functioned as an international airport.

Dowsett's talk was one of many events organised and hosted by Brent Cross Town to celebrate the opening of its new visitor pavilion. More events at the Pavilion are planned for 2022.



Credit Barnet Local Studies



Edwardian winter wonderland

BY MARK AMIES

This idyllic snow-covered scene is Nether Court, Finchley in 1904, three years into the reign of King Edward VII, and ten years before World War One. Some of you may be familiar with this grand building as the clubhouse of Finchley Golf Club, but in 1904 it was the home of Henry Thomas Tubbs. Tubbs had made his wealth from textile manufacture and property speculation. His company Tubbs Lewis & Co had been established with partner Joseph Lewis, in London in 1854, manufacturing boot elastic, (similar to the elastic you would get in a Chelsea boot).

Henry Tubbs was born in London, the son of a shoemaker. Leaving school, he became an apprentice to a haberdashery company, and then set up his own business with Lewis. Tubbs Lewis & Co became very successful, with the elasticated cloth finding its way into other products, in particular undergarments, or 'knicker elastic', in modern parlance. The two partners also invested their money into property and made considerable fortunes.

Tubbs decided to have a private mansion built on land purchased just off Frith Lane. The building was designed by architect Percy Stone, and construction started in 1880 and finished three years later. It was very much the aspirational home for

a man who had done rather well for himself, (Tubbs also served as a local Justice of the Peace), with fifteen bedrooms, an entrance lodge, and a coach house, with its own accommodation above. The grounds had formal gardens with a fountain, a lake with an island, a walled kitchen garden and a nursery garden.

Tubbs lived at Nether Court until his death in 1917. The house and grounds were purchased by Hendon Urban District Council and then sold to Finchley Golf Club in 1929. It survives as the largest, and best-preserved Victorian property in the London Borough of Barnet. Many of the original features remain, including the dining room, saloon, hall and main staircase with its stained-glass windows. The six windows include the H.T.T. and M.L.T. monograms for Tubbs and his wife on either side of the Tubbs heraldic arms. The three windows below portray scenes of a farm labourer and his family. The Finchley Club still uses a variant of the coat of arms used by Henry Thomas Tubbs and his motto "Per Deum et Industriam obtinui", which translated means, "What I have I obtained through God and hard work".

Looking at the wintry scene in the 1904 photograph one can only imagine how deep the snow was or just how cold it was, however, judging by the number of chimneys the grand house has, it was almost certainly nice and warm inside!

NEWS

15

East Barnet woman jailed for causing death of 13-year-old with dangerous driving

Trainee nurse was working two jobs and “blacked out” in her car before hitting young girl

A trainee nurse has been found guilty of dangerous driving after she struck a 13-year-old girl with her car last year. Detective Sergeant (DS) Matt Smith, one of the police officers investigating this case, said “refusal to take responsibility for using the roads safely led to the death of a young girl”.

Victoria Carson was walking along the pavement of Longmore Avenue, East Barnet on 29th June 2020. As she was walking she was struck by De Carvalho, 43 of East Barnet.

De Carvalho was in the second year of a nursing degree at university with a vocational placement at a London hospital. However, she

was also working two other paid full-time jobs. By day she was a private carer and by night she worked at a care home. She had worked approximately 440 hours between 1st June 2020 and the day of the collision and

she routinely drove her car to her various jobs despite not having the correct insurance cover.

During the trial De Carvalho claimed that she had “blacked out” just prior to the collision and “had no memory” until shortly afterwards. The



prosecution argued that she had fallen asleep due to the excessive hours she had been working.

She was sentenced to 42 months imprisonment but with a 16 month discount on account of her previous good character. She has also been disqualified from driving for four years.

“*This tragic case should serve as a reminder to all drivers [to make sure you] are entirely fit to drive*”

DS Smith said: “De Carvalho seemed to feel entitled to drive around London, regardless of her fitness to be behind the wheel...my thoughts and deepest sympathies remain with Victoria’s family.

“This tragic case should serve as a reminder to all drivers [to make sure you] are entirely fit to drive and not putting yourself and others in danger.”

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Data reveals that Barnet Homes has moved thousands of temporary tenants outside of the borough

Data, obtained by the *Post* using a Freedom of Information Request, reveals that Barnet Homes has moved thousands of tenants outside of the London Borough of Barnet over the last eight years.

According to the data, between 2014-2021 6733 temporary tenants were moved to council accommodation outside of the borough. The vast majority were placed in Brent and Enfield, neighbouring boroughs to Barnet. However, a significant proportion has been moved outside of London altogether. 63 were moved to Peterborough and two people have moved as far away as Manchester.

Barnet Homes do not keep count of the number of people who have refused to be moved “as obtaining this data would require manually reviewing each individual case which would far exceed the time allowed for a Freedom of Information Act request”, they said. So, we asked Citizens Advice in Barnet if they could give us an indication of how many council tenants contacted them to ask for advice on being moved outside of the borough. Since April 2021, they have advised 14 people on out of borough accommodation. Generally speaking, they said, people concerned about out of borough moves are anxious that they won’t be able to keep their jobs, their children will have to change schools and they will lose contact with their community, which, for some, can take years to rebuild.

Barnet Homes said: “Where reasonably practicable, we will try to place all households within or as close as possible to the London Borough of Barnet. We will take into account jobs and education, and make every effort to keep families near these, but unfortunately, it may not always be possible. This is due to a lack of temporary accommodation in Barnet, and in some cases, because accommodation in Barnet may not be affordable for homeless applicants. All offers of accommodation under the homeless legislation are subject to a statutory framework including a Code of Guidance and case law. Applicants are able to seek an independent review of the suitability of the accommodation internally with a further appeal of the reviewing officers’ decision available in the county court.”

Read about the Barnet mother of two concerned that she could be housed anywhere in the UK: barnetpost.co.uk/injured-mother-left-trapped-in-flat#article

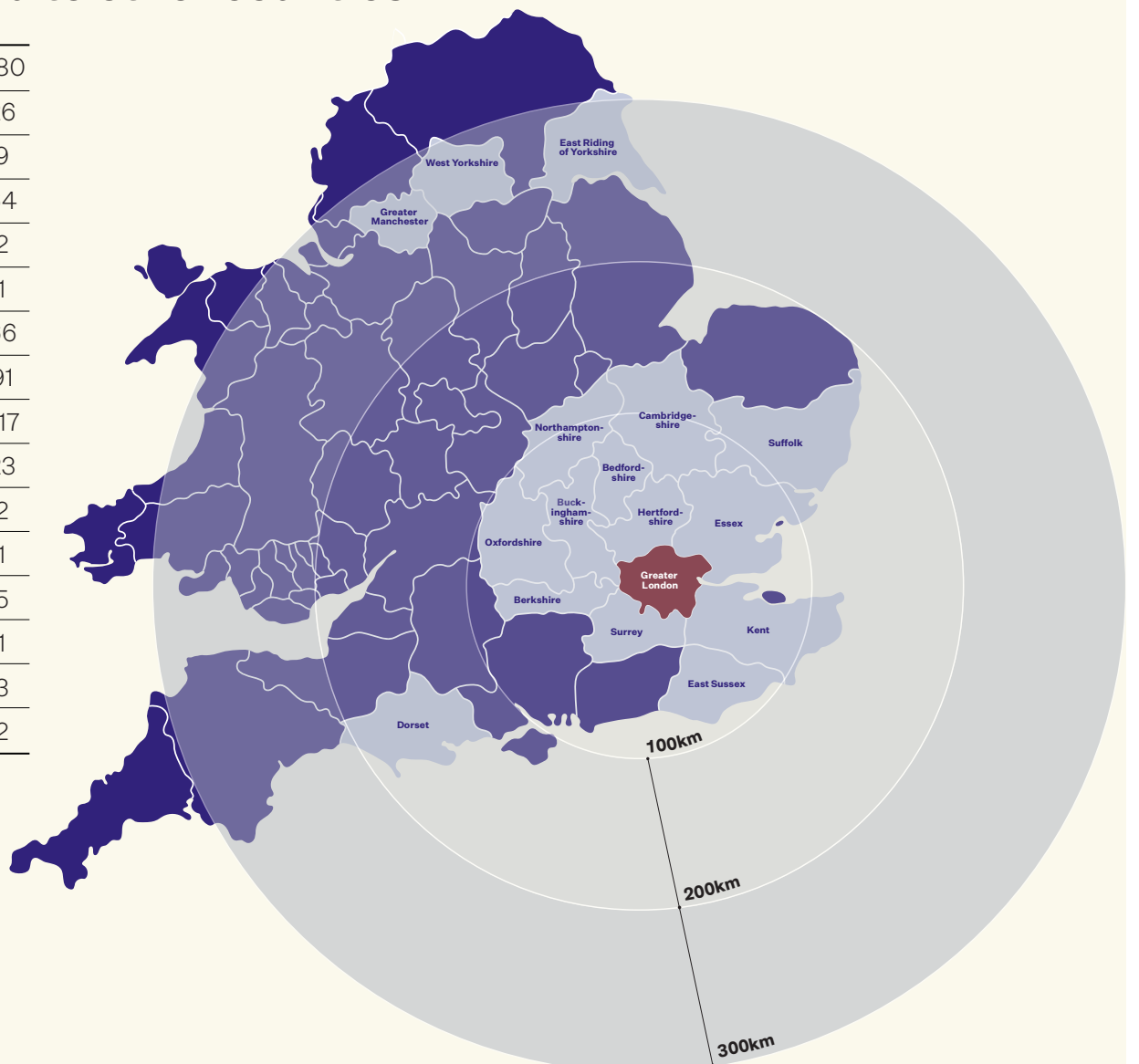
Tenants moved to other London boroughs

Barking & Dagenham	61	Hounslow	69
Bexley	10	Islington	107
Brent	1594	Kensington	4
Bromley	1	Kingston Upon Thames	1
Camden	169	Lambeth	8
Croydon	17	Lewisham	20
Ealing	164	Merton	2
Enfield	1366	Newham	81
Greenwich	23	Redbridge	98
Hackney	230	Southwark	7
Hammersmith	25	Sutton	4
Haringey	797	Tower Hamlets	176
Harrow	248	Waltham Forest	75
Havering	64	Wandsworth	2
Hillingdon	152	Westminster	62



Tenants moved to other counties

Bedfordshire	480
Berkshire	26
Buckinghamshire	9
Cambridgeshire	64
Dorset	2
East Riding of Yorkshire	1
East Sussex	66
Essex	91
Hertfordshire	317
Kent	23
Manchester	2
Northamptonshire	1
Oxfordshire	5
Suffolk	1
Surrey	3
West Yorkshire	2



COLUMNS | 18

Credit Wendy Alcock



New year, new beginnings

Time to set your gardening goals for 2022

BY WENDY ALCOCK

Happy new year gardeners and growers of Barnet! January may be a relatively cold and dark month but it's also a time of anticipation because we are past the winter solstice and spring is on its way.

The start of the year is, of course, also the month we like to set challenges for ourselves to try new things or stop bad habits. So with that in mind, here are a few suggestions of new year's resolutions to try in your little slice of green this year:

Grow a new plant (ideally food)

No matter how many years you've been growing it's always fun to try and grow something new. Last year I tried peanuts for the first time (not very successfully) but the luffas the year before were lush. Fun fact: if you try and grow any of your own food I promise you will come away with increased respect for the farmers around the world who feed us three times a day. And it will also taste better than anything you can buy from the shops.

Stop using peat in compost

Sadly lots of the compost sold by garden centres and supermarkets contains peat which is a hugely important carbon-rich plant material that's being used up at an alarming rate. When peat is extracted the carbon it's holding in the ground is released as carbon dioxide, which, rather than slowing down climate change only serves to speed it up. Look for peat-free composts and if a retailer doesn't have any in stock ask them why.

Volunteer at a community garden

Barnet has an increasing number of community gardens sprouting up across the borough. From food growing to 'friends of' green spaces, most of them are always on the lookout for another pair of hands to help out. They're a great way to learn new skills and meet your neighbours in the great outdoors too.

Make a small pond or build a bug hotel

These are two fun ways to encourage more wildlife into your plot and they don't need to be huge

– an old washing up bowl makes a great pond. Bees, birds and beetles will love both and don't forget wildlife equals chemical-free pest control later in the year.

Swap something you no longer need

We're all guilty of holding on to things for that 'just in case moment' (aren't we!?) but January is a great time for a clear out. You might even get something more useful back in return! If you have seeds you no longer need I'll be holding a seed swap in High Barnet on Sunday 6th March (subject to covid rules). Look out for more info online in the next few weeks.

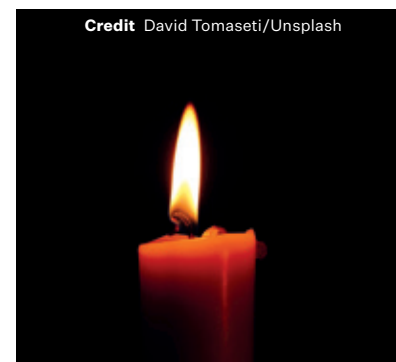
You'll find other resolution ideas in previous issues of *Barnet Post* (watering wisely in July, composting in October, avoiding chemicals in November or tree planting in December) but please get in touch to let me know what new year's resolutions you'll be making in your garden this year.

Follow @HaveAGrow on Instagram or visit Wendy in her community garden 'Incredible Edible' in New Barnet

BY RORY COOPER

Lighting a candle in the dark

As the nights have drawn in and the temperature has dropped, midwinter has well and truly set in. Winter is often a challenging time for our sense of wellbeing as we get less fresh air, natural light and exercise and some of us hide away at home. In Barnet, with so many of the winter festivals that our borough's diversity of faiths celebrate, I am struck by how many are marked by the lighting of candles. By bringing light into the dark and signifying hope. From Diwali through Hanukkah to Christmas and many more, winter festivals call upon celebrants to light a flame. It is fitting then that the international symbol for suicide awareness and prevention is a lit candle.



Credit David Tomasetti/Unsplash

“Winter is often a challenging time for our sense of wellbeing as we get less air, natural light and exercise

Millions of people around the world remember loved ones they have lost and those who are suffering by taking a moment and lighting a candle in remembrance.

Many of us will very sadly have lost someone close to us or know someone who has died by suicide. This includes me. In the UK, suicide is the biggest killer of men under 49. In 2019 there were 6,800 registered deaths by suicide in England and Wales, with nearly 50 of them taking place in Barnet. Due to the intense stigma, sadness and shame often associated with suicide, we still don't discuss what is a very common and important public health issue. We only compound the problem by not talking about the issue with those that we love. Many people consider or contemplate suicide

but not enough of us feel able to talk about or discuss these thoughts and feelings.

If you have been bereaved by suicide you might feel any number of feelings: intense sadness, shock, anger, frustration, confusion, and isolation. Some people also talk about experiencing a sense of shame or guilt, and while this is a very common reaction it is important to remember that people who take their own lives

are often trying to stop feelings of distress that can feel as intense and real as physical pain – the reasons for suicide are complex and you are not to blame. Suicide

can have a ripple effect, extending well beyond the person's immediate family and friends. How you are affected will depend on your relationship with the person who has died, the strength of the attachment and the circumstances around the death. The hardest part of dealing with suicide is the blame we place upon ourselves. The fact is, we are never to blame if someone else is determined to take their own life. But, just listening and talking to someone can be immensely helpful.

This winter, I encourage all of us to communicate whatever our current personal circumstances but particularly if we are in any way worried by how those around to us are feeling. We can all help each other bring light into the dark and hope out of despair.

To learn more about the suicide prevention and mental health awareness work being done in Barnet this year and some of the free training and resources available have a look: barnetwellbeing.org.uk/general-8

When life is difficult, Samaritans are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them for free on 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org to find your nearest branch.

SPORT | 19

Barnet FC are showing signs of life under Brennan

BY NNAMDI ONYEAGWARA

It has been three months since Barnet sacked ex-manager, Harry Kewell.

The Bees endured a slow and miserable start to the season under Kewell. They looked bereft of direction and hope in those opening weeks and results showed as much.

However, there has been a significant shift in fortunes since Kewell's September sacking and life under new manager, Dean Brennan, has proved to be much more enjoyable.

The ex-Crawley Town, Notts County and Oldham Athletic boss was appointed Barnet FC boss back in June replacing his predecessor, Simon Bassey.

Under the reign of Kewell, Barnet endured a torrid start to the season. They played seven games and were winless in all seven, losing five and drawing twice.

During this time, the Bees scored on average a goal a game, while they conceded an average 2.7 goals per game.

A 2-0 away loss at Bromley would end up being Kewell's final game and he was sacked on the 20th September, with Barnet languishing at the bottom of the National League in 22nd place.

“

We've got togetherness and we are creating that winning mentality

”

One key aspect of the appointment of Harry Kewell was the co-appointment of Dean Brennan as head of football.

After Kewell was sacked, Brennan took over as Barnet head

coach and things have changed dramatically since then.

In the 14 games since Kewell's sacking, Barnet has won eight, drawn two and lost four.

They have averaged 1.35 goals per game during this period, while defensively they have made the biggest improvement so far, conceding an average one goal per game.

Standout performers throughout this period have been Daniel Powell, Rob Hall, Adam Marriott, Ephron Mason-Clark, Sam Beard and Reiss Greenidge.

The new mentality that the team and its head coach have adopted since September can be epitomised by a quote from Brennan in an interview after the 2-1 win against Aldershot.

Brennan said, “we've got togetherness and we are creating that winning mentality.”

Indeed, they are.

Twitter: @NnamdiOnye

CLLR'S COLUMN



How Hendon thrives

BY CLLR MARK SHOOTER, HENDON

I've been a Councillor for Hendon for eleven years, and have been proud of the great improvements to this area that has also been my home for decades. Looking forward, it is really exciting to see the investments planned in our ward, many of which are in partnership with Middlesex University.

Despite the recent difficult retail environment, I was thrilled to see the new Savers shop on Brent Street in October – showing the confidence that retailers have in Hendon. The shop is within a new development, which is one of many improvements we'll be seeing in the near future. Middlesex University is working with us on a student project to redesign Sentinel Square and enhance the shopping experience in the area. Despite recent difficulties, people are really confident that Hendon will continue to be a great place to shop and to open shops.

This month, a proposal will go to the council's planning committee which – after a long consultation period – will see the construction of a brand-new library, a Safer Neighbourhood Team hub and a GP surgery for our community as a part of our Hendon Hub scheme.

We've also been making sure that other infrastructure is being looked after, and major gas works along the Brent Street, Brampton Gove junction should soon be completed. Our improvements to the play area in Brookside Walk Park are going well, and I have requested an extra investment to the play area of over £25,000, to make it even better for young families in and around Hendon.

We will be having some of the most exciting projects in Barnet over the next few years taking place in our ward. I'm looking forward to continuing to support those and make Hendon an even better place to live for the years, and decades, to come.

Surgery cancelled until further notice. Residents can contact the Councillor via their contact details published below.

Conservative Group Members Room, Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon NW4 4BG

Email cllr.m.shooter@barnet.gov.uk



The Hive Stadium home to National League Barnet FC, London Bees of the FA Women's Championship and Tottenham Hotspur Women of the FA WSL. Credit: Wikimedia

Support independent local journalism

What we do

Here at *Barnet Post* we do things differently. We combine professional journalism with voluntary contributions from people who live and work in the borough and create content which is responsive to and reflective of the community.

These are challenging times for print media with many newspapers closing and advertising revenue in decline, but our not-for-profit model offers a new approach to creating local journalism which is inclusive and accountable.

How you can help

As a not-for-profit publication we rely on the generous support of our community. We look to our readers, who recognise the value of independent journalism, to help support us.

You can do this by becoming a member either as an individual or as an organisation. See the rewards opposite and once you've decided what package you would like, visit our website: barnetpost.co.uk/membership

Individual rewards

£3 per month upwards:

Name in print and online, pin badge

£5 per month upwards:

Name in print and online, pin badge, tote bag, paper posted to you every month

Organisational rewards

£10 per month:

Name in print and online, 10% discount on advertising

£20 per month:

Name and logo in print and online, 20% discount on advertising

£50 per month:

Name and logo in print and online, 40% discount, six free small adverts per year

Members

Binita Shah, Simon Watson, Ray Floyd, Fatema Ahmed, Catherine Loveday, Andrea Poser, Katharine Sathe, Parmodh Sharma, Charlotte Thompson, John Thompson, David Brindle, Michael Gilbey